



Elise and Jon Fletcher

Update from the Edges 5 | July 2026



Location: Thailand



What we do: Immersing ourselves in the life of a vibrant slum community, sharing Jesus' love with people around us



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

It uplifts and inspires us when we hear news from other people connected to CMS working with people pushed to the edges of life. Recently we read about Alison in Kyiv, Ukraine, who shared how answers to daily small prayers and witnessing incredible miracles keep her going as she serves God in a warzone. You can read her story using the link at the bottom of our update. Following the same link you can also read about displaced disciples in Ethiopia – CMS partners are helping to design training for church leaders living in refugee camps who have never had access to theological teaching before.

It's been a busy few months since we last wrote, with many opportunities to work with families in the wonderful Khlong Toei slum communities and to advocate for system change that protects every child's right to family. Our Keeping Families Together (KFT) programme has clear goals but there are also unexpected breakthroughs to celebrate with participants along the way.

This month, one single mother, Khun Lin, made the brave decision to begin clearing her flat after decades of hoarding. It had reached the point where she had only a small rectangle of space to lay down a mattress to share with her toddler at night. The electrics had been nibbled by rats but no electrician could enter to fix it. Hoarding is more common than you might expect here, often driven by a scarcity mindset and an excess of charitable donations. Yet being common doesn't make it any less complex.

We gathered a team of volunteers from the church and the neighbourhood, and Khun Lin directed the process as she felt comfortable. We used ropes to lower things down from the second floor to the pavement below. As we sorted bag after bag of toys and clothing, she reflected on how little value the contents now had; she couldn't even give them away. There is still a long way to go, but since beginning the clearing process, Khun Lin's teenage daughter has returned to the family home having previously moved out. We are encouraged to see the family feeling hopeful about the future as they continue the KFT programme.

I've been reflecting on something Khun Lin said about how the hoarding had spiralled beyond her control: "I just kept bringing stuff home as I always had; I didn't know any different." Only with the right support and viable options was she able to assess the situation and attempt change. I recently taught at a three-day Step Ahead training event on the theme of Family Strengthening, at which the refrain was, "we



Eating with KFT families at our recent family fun day

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



do the best with what we know, and then, when we know better, we do better". Khun Lin's family was never far from my mind as we taught about child development, child rights and the push and pull factors for family separation in Thailand (where one in four children does not live with a biological parent).

This training event was attended by many groups that currently run children's homes but which are bravely exploring the long process of transitioning children back to family-based care. All began taking in children with good intentions of relieving poverty and increasing access to education. There has been

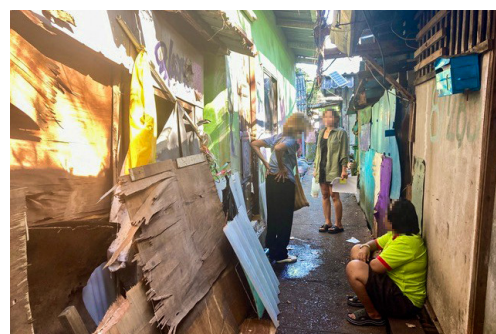
no model for doing this without removing the child from their family and it has become a social norm for struggling parents to send their children away. However, scale this up and there are now over 700 privately funded children's homes in Thailand, in which over 90 per cent of children have a living parent.

But what if we did things differently? What if we took the resources that fund raising children in institutions and used these to strengthen families in their communities, preventing the need for separation? Many adult care leavers are beginning to ask why this hasn't always been the case. Desmond Tutu famously said "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in." There is growing momentum for this upstream work of family strengthening, but changing outdated systems takes courage and commitment. Just as it took courage for Khun Lin to question and change the harmful habits of a lifetime, we need to ask difficult questions of ourselves as NGOs, missionaries, donors and volunteers working on behalf of children.

While it is sometimes easy to despair, there are many signs of hope. We see the Spirit of God at work in the new-found confidence of a mother to make change for herself and her family. We see the Spirit of God at work in the gathering of diverse practitioners centred on the needs of children, open to working together for change. We value your prayers for the children of Thailand and invite you to join with us in praying for the following:

- ▶ A very sad child abuse case in our neighbourhood has weighed heavily this past month. Please pray for healing for the child and for opportunities to demonstrate God's love to the family. Please pray for wisdom for Step Ahead caseworkers and for government social workers in their decision making.
- ▶ Please pray for deep rest for our three children Elliot, Sam and Bow as they begin their summer holidays and await A-level/ GCSE results. Pray for peace about next steps and strong faith in the goodness of God.

Much love, Jon and Elise



Photos from top to bottom: Sorting through bin bags as we began the flat clearance; home visiting in the community; Elise speaking at Step Ahead Family Strengthening training; Jon teaching at the KFT Family Finances module.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

We hope that you're inspired as you read about Alison in Kyiv, Ukraine, who is seeing many answers to prayer as she faithfully serves God. And that you get a moment to read about displaced disciples in Ethiopia – church leaders taking part in bespoke training designed for people living in refugee camps. Read more stories about empowering people pushed to the edges at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of CMS partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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